

December 5, 1945

Dear Edward:

I was both pleased and surprised about the Western Reserve business. After thinking it over a bit I contacted Prof. Peterson and Dr. Meek—confidentially, of course. Two or three points arose as a consequence of these conferences, and my own cogitation.

One. What is the status of Prof. Victor Myers who has held the post for many years and just recently has been given another? If Myers and his friends hold a grievance, then it might be very uncomfortable for his successor on account of undue criticism and bad feelings. I have written to my good friend Dr. Welch and requested his opinion relative to this delicate problem. I have known Dr. Myers for many years—even before he went to Iowa, from whence he went to Western Reserve. My contacts with him (at the Meetings only) have been very pleasant. Scientifically, I've always considered him to be very substantial but not a top-flight man. I could warn you that unless he feels kindly disposed towards his successor, it could be quite a source of annoyance. If, however, he has obtained a better job, or one that he clearly preferred, then that would not be a sore spot.

Two. The position is in the Medical School and the Docs and students expect the professor of biochemistry to be of help to them; otherwise the School would hardly support a biochemistry department. Peterson said as much with respect to his own work here. He is in the Ag. School and, as such, he has to cater a bit to his audience, namely, agricultural interests, at least to make the Ag. interests feel reasonably well satisfied.

At Reserve, Emeritus Professor Sollmann and Arnold Welch, his successor, are both good friends of mine. I know Dr. Wiggers fairly well but not as well as Welch and Sollmann. Wiggers is a non-diplomatic, outspoken fellow, but Dr. Meek says that in all his experience, he, Meek, has never seen any indication of Wiggers holding any grudges. He may rant and differ vociferously and bluntly, but when he finds he himself is wrong he is man enough to take it and admit it. I knew Hoerr when he was a youngster in Bensley's department of anatomy at Chicago. I always thought well of him. His wife is, I believe, Bensley's daughter, but I'm not too sure at the moment. Bensley is one of my good friends.

Three. As I have probably stated before, an academic orphan is in a bad spot. Your present chief is undoubtedly a botanist. Should you have graduate students who want a higher degree in biochemistry, they would hardly want a degree in botany! If you had a chief in microbiology, and in an independent department, things at Yale would be more salubrious. You can bet on human character to the extent that a botanist could scarcely take the same interest in microbiology (biochemistry, in other words, in your case) as would a chief in "microbiology." This may be, theoretically, narrow thinking, but after all, I have had occasions in the years gone by

to see the wheels go 'round.

Another point about Yale is that it is an Eastern school, an endowed institution, managed officially by Eastern "blue-bloods" and internally run by ambitious Eastern "ancestral bone-rattlers." I think these features have been the cause of such mediocrity as has for long existed in the Medical School. Chittenden was in the saddle for a long time. He was succeeded by Mendel, who had fought Chittenden, and hence the Mendel crowd spat on the former Chittenden group. A happy family! Chemistry at Yale is also weak. Yandell Henderson and his man Friday, i.e., Haggard, made a prolific but unsound pair.

So you have my views on both places. Your former pal, Beadle, has gone as head of a department to Calif. Tech., fulfilling your predictions of impending changes. Could it be possible that Beadle would try to get you back in California?

The all important point, as you know I would emphasize, is what are the facilities for research. Salary and rank should sooner or later take care of themselves, providing research productivity continues and some diplomatic acumen exists. Some people, you know, get places by pure politics; others use politics along with efficiency, and occasionally a good producer is of such a rotten personality as to constitute a serious impediment.

When I hear from Welch I'll let you know his opinion of the Myers' complication. As to your becoming a teacher and colleague of medicos, you will have to set your own sails.

It is quite a flattering offer, and I continue to shine by reflected glory.

Love,

P.S. If you have ambitions to become a member of the National Academy your chances would be better at Yale than at Cleveland. As you know, people East of the Alleghenies are the elite.